

## THE REAL INSIGHTS OF INDIVIDUAL CONCERNS ON COMMITMENT TO CHANGE – THE GOVERNMENT LINK COMPANIES (GLCS)

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### Abstract

This study identifies the real insights of the individual's commitment to change during the major organizational change and what are the factors that really motivates them to commit to change. This research used a multiple case studies of a transformation programs embarked by the government-linked companies (GLCs) in Malaysia. It draws upon two-rounds of personal in-depth interviews with six participants from six sectors in various levels in the companies. This naturalistic study highlights the employees' commitment to change is heavily related to the transformational leadership style. Members of the divisions above all couched their concerns on change commitment to almost equal extents on the authenticity, strong, visionary, and passion leadership that have clear end game for the business. This research helps further delineate relative employees' commitment to change dimensions particularly on the organic approach. Moreover, it helps the change agent in developing the right leadership for the right people and for the right change efforts. There are few efforts exist to empirically test the relationship of the key factors to the employees' commitment to change, however none attempts have been made in the context of the GLCs and naturalistic settings.

**Keywords:** Transformational leadership, commitment to change, case study, naturalistic, GLCs, Malaysia

## Introduction

Change happens inevitably whether in a large or in a small scale (Chia, 2014; Gilpin-Jackson, 2017; Nyström, Höög, Garvare, Weinehall, & Ivarsson, 2013), and requires the business entities to be ready to manage the changes wisely (Child, 2015; Walmsley & Lewis, 2014). It is important to understand how Facebook successfully manage the change (Dehghani & Tumer, 2015). Likewise, the change in the Walmart (Clifford, 2012), the frontier or a leading smartphone, Apple (Yun, Won, & Park, 2016). Therefore, it is understood that change is crucial for the organizational success and sustainability (Ahmad & Francis, 2009; Clifford, 2012; Vencato et al., 2014), although many others failed. Same like in the context of Malaysia that have been neglected, particularly on the employees' commitment to change. Companies in any sectors ought to respond quickly towards global change in order to successfully fulfil the customer demands (Burke, 2002; Kanter, 2011; Westover, 2010).

It is obvious that the organizational change is not merely for the sake of change, instead it is because of the pressure from the intense competitions that required it to deliver wealth to the stakeholders (Cennamo, Berrone and Gomez-Mejia, 2012; Susnienė and Purvinis, 2015; Taghian, D'Souza and Polonsky, 2015). In order to meet the desirable outcomes, they have to ensure the employees could embrace the change efforts, and they are more keen on the recognition and appreciation from their top management (Holtzhausen & Fourie, 2009; Robescu & Iancu, 2016).

Therefore, it is important to understand how the employees could help the organization to inculcate the required change to the individuals, organizations or groups, which is in line with the concerns of Cummings and Worley (2014), and Wooten and Hoffman (2016).

Apparent issues occurred among the large companies such as a more complex bureaucracy that can lead to the distortion of information, greater vagueness and lower the trust among employees (Alvesson, 2011; Jain, 2015) that can affect their commitment to that company's change programmes. Therefore, without employees embracing the change properly, most of large companies failed to respond quickly to the unpredictable and rapid change of customers' needs (Gelaidan & Ahmad, 2011; Haeckel, 2013). Other than that, the large companies have a crucial role in the business market such as controlling a large amount of public wealth, producing a wide number of jobs and employment, engaging in creative and innovative activities and investing in research in a huge capacity (Ali, 2014), for instance, the automotive companies (Mousavi, Aziz, & Ismail, 2011). However, the global crisis affected the four regional economies in Asia such as Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia (Stubbs, 2017). For example, this is because the slow movement in the China's economy, as which it was one of Malaysia's largest business partners, has affected the degenerate of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth. Hence, the turbulences in the economy encouraged Malaysia to change the way businesses are operated. It requires the change in management and operations in most businesses (Tuanmat & Smith, 2011); the change is the business model (Demil & Lecocq, 2010; Johnson, Christensen, & Kagermann, 2008; Zot, Amit, & Massa, 2011), right sizing of the companies (Kedrosky, 2009; Schilling & Logan, 2008), leadership change (Gilmore, 2003; Kotter, 1999; Schmid, 2008) and so forth. The turbulences in the environments affected oil and gas, banking, rubber and palm oil, property and construction sectors (Chander & Welsh, 2015; Lai et al. 2014). Lai et al. (2014) stated that the global financial

crisis has direct effect on the profit in this sector by slightly causing the high increase in building materials and the fuel prices used in the business activities.

Likewise, as stated in Economic Transformation Program (ETP) 2017, those six major sectors: oil, gas and energy; palm oil and rubber; electronics and electricals; communication, properties and; wholesale and retail (automotive) are included in 12 National Key Economic Areas (NKEAs), in which it was one of components of ETP as formulation of Malaysia's National Transformation Programme that was targeted for 2020. Change initiatives are somewhat the norm for companies currently, regardless their size, sector or industry of their company (Bellou & Chatzinikou, 2015; Gelaidan & Ahmad, 2011). Organizational change is required in any companies in responding the global crisis that occurred (Gelaidan & Ahmad, 2011).

In order to implement change effectively, it requires commitment in any organizations. A commitment to change has been depicted as an adhesive tool that provides crucial bond between people and purpose of change itself (Baraldi, Kalyal, Berntson, Näswall, & Sverke, 2010). As stated by Armenakis and Harris (2009), an organization ought to grasp how to conduct the appropriate organizational changes that will be encompassed by the employees in order to either survive and be prosperous. Commitment to change has been proved to be a crucial part in psychological mechanism in connecting organizational efforts to conduct planned change and employees' behavior (Jaros, 2010). Most companies would like to reveal their employees' talents and enthusiasm through their commitment (Senge, 2014). Employee commitment seems to be crucial in decision making for any organizations to be able in business competition and to adapt with changes. The commitment among employees can be a crucial tool for improving their performance in organizations and the organization performance.

Yet, the evidence regarding the importance of employees' commitment to the change have been discussed (Chen et al., 2012; Gelaidan & Ahmad, 2011; Nijhof, de Jong, & Beukhof, 1998). The importance of individual commitment has perceived as more practical in order to ensure the change happen effectively rather than the organizational commitment to support the change itself (Elias, 2009; Ford, Weissbein, & Plamondon, 2003; Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). Gelaidan (2012) revealed that leadership is a determinant factor to provide facilities to the employees to be committed to the change. Nevertheless, previous literatures only focused on the practical advice and suggestions but lack of ways to manage different insights in change efforts (Senge, 2014). Thus, this makes the current research investigates more in-depth about the factors that influence the employees' commitment to change. Leadership is not the only factor that influence the employees' commitment to change. Many studies also stated that the positive treatments that provided from companies to their employees led to employees' respond for a strong commitment for their company (Klein, Molloy, & Brinsfield, 2012; Pennaforte, 2016). These are the various ways of how these companies treat the employees and analyse their personalities and how well the companies could communicate the change to their employees (Ahmad & Jalil, 2013; Klein, Cooper, Molloy, Swanson, 2014; Spagnoli & Caetano, 2012).

Other than that, many studies focused on a vital role of internal communication in the change process (Ahmad & Jalil, 2013; Berneth, Armenakis, Field, & Walker, 2007) but there are no literatures that discussed its role in employees' commitment to change. The researcher believes that communication is needed to raise awareness among employees on the need of change as well

as creating the sense of urgency to the change whereby it leads to the commitment to change. There is also a scarcity of studies on examining the relationship between the personality traits and the organizational commitment to change (Erdheim, Wang, & Zickar, 2006; Spagnoli & Caetano, 2012; Tziner, Waisman-Manor, Brodman, & Vardi, 2008; Zettler Friedrich, & Hilbig, 2011).

Leadership has been studied from a variety of perspectives such as the traits theory (Stogdill, 1948), behavioral theory (Fleishman, 1953), contingency theory (Fiedler & Chemers, 1967), situational theory (Hambleton, Blanchard, & Hersey, 1977) and transformational and charismatic leadership (House, 1977). However, none of these authors discussed the influence of change commitment by looking at individual levels. Therefore, there is a need to understand the style leadership in the change programmes in the large companies (Anderson & Anderson, 2010; Kotter, 2008; Kuratko, 2007; Sinclair & Agyeman, 2005). Thus, we attempt to fill this gap by examining the relationship between the leadership style and the employee commitment to change.

Leaders face a lot of adversities while dealing with change in their organization (Booth, 2015; Bridges & Bridges, 2017; Rao, 2015). The lack of confidence of leadership in decision-making can affect the change commitment as one of the forces of the global crisis (Chander & Welsh, 2015). Although there are many debates on the leadership styles, transformational leadership was known as a suitable leadership style that fits with the organizational change (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Eisenbach, Watson, & Pillai, 1999). This type of leadership supports the employee's commitment, self-efficacy and empowerment during change (Bommer et al., 2005; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Lowe et al., 1996). In addition, transformational leadership generates compliance and consistency with commitment that ensured by transactional leadership (Nadler & Tushman, 1990; Hamid, 2012; Herold et al., 2008; Seo et al., 2012; Yu et al., 2002) that understanding there is no standard agreement on any leadership styles that would influence the employees' commitment to change, the current study views both transformational and transactional leadership style are complement each other.

Some studies have highlighted the impact of culture on change as an important factor along with leadership (Hofstede, 1981) but not equally important as culture influence was based on the context of the change efforts (Narine & Persaud, 2003). Furthermore, Yiing and Ahmad (2009) stated that organizational culture plays an important role in the relationship between leadership style and organizational commitment.

McKinsey and Company (2008) have found that two-thirds of organizational change processes faced failure in achieving outcome. It was supported by some studies that noticed the change failure occurred in organizational change such as Burnes (2009), Senturia, Flees, and Maceda (2008); and Rogers and Williams (2006). Culture in change is required among employees to significantly improve their service level in organizational change (Schneider, Teske, & Mintrom, 2011), but none focused on their actual commitment to change. Culture in organization has been seen as a hereditary tradition that was brought within organization. It was assumed as the intangible organizational property that has life of its own (Wines & Hamilton, 2009), thereby it was not possible to be changed (Schein, 2010). However, some other previous studies have different views that stated organizational culture could be changed gradually in the organization (Jorritsma & Wilderom, 2012) and would affect the organizational performance (Gelaidan, 2012).

Therefore, the questions raised to this study is that “what are the individual concerns regarding the employees’ commitment to change?”

## **Employee Commitment to Change**

There have been numbers of longitudinal studies stressed on the importance of commitment to change to be studied (Abrell-Vogel & Rowold, 2014; Chen et al., 2012; Davis, 2015; Erkutlu & Chafra, 2016; Rogiest et al., 2015) and what are the factors that influence employees’ commitment to change. Case study in Australia has shown that the development in their career led to employees’ commitment and engagement up to 51% from 297 HR specialists (Davis, 2015). Apparently, Sidey (1978) stressed that leadership involves total belief and commitment on the norms.

Previous literatures defined and measured commitment in various ways (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Morrow, 1993; Mowday, 1982). They agreed that the notion of organizational commitment was contributed as a multidimensional construct, however none could explain in-depth on the reality of the employees’ commitment to change. Interestingly, Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) argued that the “core essence” of commitment should be the same regardless of the target of that commitment. Based on a review of existing definitions, they suggested that commitment, in general, could be defined as “a force that binds an individual to a course of action of relevance to one or more targets”. Explaining further, they said “a force that binds an individual to this course of action can reflect (i) a desire to provide support for the change based on a belief in its inherent benefits (affective commitment to change), (ii) a recognition that there are costs associated with failure to provide support for the change (continuance commitment to change), and (iii) a sense of obligation to provide support for the change (normative commitment to change). That is, employees can feel bound to support a change because they (want to), (have to), and/or (ought to)” (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002, p. 475). Furthermore, it is observed the importance of commitment to change in an organization practically to ensure the achievement of the desired outcome. Meyer et al. (1997, p.474) stressed that “commitment is arguably one of the most important factors involved in employees’ support for change initiatives”. Other targets of commitment could include a supervisor, an organizational unit, an occupation, a union, a goal or any entity or behavior.

Hence, it should be noted that the employee is the main factor for successful organizational change practically in their commitment. The importance of employee commitment to change has been supported by many change researchers (Fedor et al., 2006; Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002; Wanberg & Banas, 2000; Oakland & Tanner, 2007), which they play an important part in making organizational change successful (Huy, 2002). However, in spite of that, there is still a lack of empirical study attempting to measure the construct, what factor related to it (Cunningham, 2006), and culture issue (Jalil, 2011).

## **Factors Associated to Employee Commitment to Change**

Cunningham (2006) examined the relationship of the commitment to change, coping with change and turnover intentions. Data were collected from 299 employees of 10 organizations undergoing significant organizational change. He found that (a) the relationship between affective

commitment to change and turnover intention was fully mediated by coping with change, (b) the relationship between continuance commitment to change and turnover intention was only partially mediated by coping with change and (c) normative commitment to change had a direct impact on turnover intention. Cunningham (2006) indicated that despite the noted importance of driver for a commitment to organizational change such as leadership, little research had systematically attempted to measure the construct, its antecedents and its outcomes. Thus, this study attempts to examine leadership style, one of the most important factors that can affect employee commitment to change.

Conway and Monks (2008) studied employee commitment to change by exploring the relationship between human resource practise and commitment to change in three health service organization in Ireland. The study found that transactional leadership had a negative impact on affective commitment to change. This suggests that transactional leaders are less effective at promoting employee commitment in a change context. Furthermore, related to the manager who practised more transformational rather than transactional leadership was positively associated with the perceptions of fairness, trust, and job security implicate in the psychological contract.

However, more study on the relationship between transformational leadership and commitment to change. This is perhaps surprising given that the literature indicates that transformational leadership is associated with change situations (Conway & Monks, 2008). There is a good deal of evidence that the style of leadership is important during major organizational change (Kiffin-Petersen & Cordery, 2003) as well as after change in order to make the change successful and enhancing the commitment to the change among the employees.

Parish et al. (2008) examined the antecedents and consequences of employee commitment to change (affective, normative, continuance). They found that all antecedents (fit with vision, employee–manager relationship quality, job motivation and role autonomy) influence commitment to change. They recommended for further research in this field adding other antecedents to commitment to change including organizational culture and/or leadership style. With respect to the previous study, the ambiguity of the gap between leadership style and commitment to change and organizational culture still existed.

Herold et al. (2008) found that transformational leadership was more strongly related to employee commitment to change compared with transactional leadership. Thus, it has been argued that transformational leadership is positively associated with employee commitment to change and transactional leadership is negatively associated with employee commitment to change. Even though there are differences and inconsistencies in this matter, and various aspects of employee commitment have been linked to transformational leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Furthermore, employee commitment to change has been identified as an important aspect of behavioral intentions to support change (Fedor, Caldwell & Herold, 2006; Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002).

Although research has demonstrated the positive relationship between the extent of transformational leadership and employee commitment to the organization (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Kark & Shamir, 2002; Koh, Steers & Terborg, 1995), there has been little research evidence on the relationship between transformational leadership and individuals' commitment to a specific change effort (Herold et al., 2008). Burke (2002), in addressing the question of whether leadership matters for organizational change, noted “what has not been as clear from the literature is the

impact of leadership on organization change” (p.241). He concluded that “it seems reasonable to assume, nevertheless, that because there is mounting evidence that leaders affect organizational performance in general, and surely they have an impact on organizational change in particular” (Burke, 2002, p. 241). In line with this, the study believes that leadership is the main factor that enhancing employee commitment to change, as the first phases in the Lewin’s work (1951).

## **Transformational Leadership**

Burns (1978) pointed out that transformational leadership can be viewed as a way to raise an organization’s need for change to a higher level of motivation and development. He also described transformational leaders as ordinary agents, able to empower subordinates to create a mission, completeness and collect goals in the process of its implementation. This style of leadership can enhance employee commitment to change. Bass (1985,1990a) identified that transformational leadership focuses on the behavior of employees that may affect their behavior towards the organization as it can change the essential values, beliefs and attitudes of the subordinates.

Burns (1978) stated that “transformational leaders attempt to bring subordinates, followers, clients or constituencies to a greater awareness about the issues of consequence” (p. 17). Therefore, the aim is to connect to employee commitment to change by making followers more aware of the objectives and expected contributions from them. In addition, Burns (1978, p. 382) defined a transformational leader as “one or more persons engaged with others in any way that leaders and followers increase the level of motivation and morality”.

This style of leadership always encourages followers to look for new ways to approach their job performance from inspirational motivation to intellectual stimulation. Ismail, Mohamad, Mohamed, Rafiuddin, and Zhen, (2010) examined the relationship between transformational and transactional leadership styles and individual outcomes (i.e. perceptions of justice and trust in the leaders). The authors found that transformational leadership is an important predictor of procedural justice, whereas transactional leadership is an important predictor of distributive justice, and that both leadership styles are important predictors of trust in leaders.

Moreover, Nguni, Slegers and Denessen (2006) examined the impact of transformational and transactional leadership on organizational commitment in primary schools in Tanzania. They found that transformational leadership has strong effects on teachers’ organizational commitment. They highlighted that the main concern of transformational forms of leadership, in contrast to transactional forms of leadership, ought to be the commitment and capacities of organizational members.

Furthermore, Laohavichien, Fredendall and Cantrell (2009) examined the relationship between infrastructure, core quality management practices and the levels of transformational and transactional leadership in firms. They found that transformational leadership significantly affects both infrastructure and core quality management practices, while transactional leadership does not significantly affect either set of practices. However, there were significantly higher levels of both transformational and transactional leadership behavior exhibited in the successful firms compared

with the unsuccessful firms. Therefore, researchers believe the results are board on the nature of the setting itself, as one of the important element to be contributed in the current research.

Burns (1978) explained what distinguishes transformational leadership from transactional leadership. Transformational leadership is concerned with the individual's needs while striving to realise common goals, whereas transactional leadership is the unification of these respective goals, values and motives in the common aim for higher goals. In addition, it involves determining rewards contingent upon the completion of the work, setting standards, identifying performance deviations and, in some cases, taking corrective action (Avolio & Bass, 2004). Still another notable distinction between the two styles is that while transformational leaders aim to motivate and engage followers by appealing to people's growth needs and creating common goals to satisfy both the leader's and the followers' needs, transactional leaders encourage and motivate followers by rewarding them for accomplished work. As highlighted previously, transformational leadership four concepts; idealised influence leadership, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration.

## **Methodology**

This research used a multiple case studies of a transformation programs embarked by the government-linked companies (GLCs) in Malaysia. It draws upon two-rounds of personal in-depth interviews with six participants from six sectors in various levels in the companies. The in-depth knowledge of social contexts acquired through qualitative research can be used to inform the design of survey questions for structures interview and self-completion questionnaires. (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The researcher exploring the phenomenon in terms of understanding the individual concerns on their commitment to change, which is in line with the ideas by Sekaran and Bougie (2016). Hence, based on Creswell (2013), the qualitative data and its analysis distil and explain those empirical results by exploring the deeper views from the participants.

The researcher selected the case study in order to understand the employees' commitment to change from both side of the employee's role including superior-subordinate perspectives. This is an inductive approach that helping the researcher to expand on to refine the concepts that have already been developed as stated by Yin (2013). Therefore, the use of multiple case studies would offer the analytical generalization in a natural setting based on the real experiences of the members in the organization.

The interviews were conducted among the managerial and operational levels in the large companies from the various sectors. The role of leaders within the company was expected to be an agent to overcome these change issues in order to analyze their leadership which affects their employees' commitment. As the leaders are the ones who understand about the change programs that had been implemented by the company. They had been interviewed about the employees' commitment to change as they are also the change agent and the superior of their subordinates, and at the same time they are also the subordinates that have to undertake the change that occurred within their companies. The researcher had provided the interview protocols in order to meet the objectives of the study.



The participants of the research were come from six sectors whereby major change programs occurred in their company. During the global crisis, the sectors that are mostly affected including the oil and gas, plantation, automotive (Chander & Welsh, 2015; Lai et al., 2014), and as stated in the Malaysian Economic Transformation Program (ETP) 2015, those six sectors were affected and do the transformation were the oil and gas, plantation, energy and electrics, communication, automotive, and manufacturing. The types of changes in the chosen companies including the redesign of the processes that related to the user requirements, and the use of new technologies as a revolution in the company. The choices are also based on the previous studies (such as reported in IDC, 2015; Santa Fe Relocation Services, 2015).

### **Semi-Structured Interview**

The interview procedure had been carried out using the consent form and the interview protocol that is given to the interviewees. The documents consisted of the consent letter with a brief interviewee's profile, and the main questions for the interviews. The researcher also acknowledged the interviewees contributions and stated that the information given during the interview sessions are strictly for the purpose of the study only, which to convince them that their information is safe and will not be disclosed without their permission.

The researcher referred to the diary as in Table 1 below:

*Table 1: Interviews' Diary*

No	Company	Sector	Date / Time	Venue
1	Maxis	Telecommunication	5 April 2016/8.00 pm	Maxis HQ Office
2	UMW Automotive	Automotive	8 April 2016/ 3.00 pm	UMW HQ Office
3	UMW Manufacturing	Manufacturing	8 April 2016/4.00 pm	UMW HQ Office
4	TNB	Energy and Electric	13 April 2016 / 3.00 pm	TNB HQ Office
5	Petronas	Oil and Gas	16 April 2016/ 3.00 pm	KLCC
6	Sime Darby	Plantation	18 April 2016/ 4.00 pm	Sime Darby HQ Office

The development of the semi-structured interview questions was done based on the previous research question asking about the individual concerns on their commitment to change. This is considered a triangulation approach, in terms of using both quantitative and qualitative methods as explained by Yin (2003) particularly to get real insights on the subject matter and to explore in-depth on certain phenomenon of interest. Moreover, it helps to give a fundamental idea of how the views of the participants are connected with the theoretical notions and what are the emerging concepts resulted from the interviews.

Mainly, the semi-structured interview focused on the employee commitment to change. Two main semi-structured interview questions were constructed as follows: 1) What is your concerns on the employees' commitment to change? and 2) What are the key factors that make you commit to change in your company? Hence, both questions were adjusted based on the individual roles in the company (i.e. superior-subordinate) roles.

Each interview session took approximately twenty (20) minutes to forty (40) minutes. The interviews were conducted with the middle managers and employees in the case studies

organization, which is also considered the recommendations by Yin (2003), where the participants for the interviews were identified based on their roles and referring the hierarchical level structure. As a result, the participants were categorized as in Table 2 below:

*Table 2: Participants of the Interview Sessions*

No.	Sector	Position	Number
1	Manufacturing	Operation Manager	1
2	Energy and Utilities	Assistant Manager	1
3	Telecommunication	Head of Performance and Development	1
4	Automotive	Manager of Customer Relations	1
5	Palm and Oil	Manager of Human Resources	1
6	Oil and Gas	Head of Sales	1
Total			6

The choices of the individual as the case studies based on the triangulation approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Yin, 2013), to verify data in different techniques and to investigate the multiple sources in more credibility (Lichtman, 2010; Yin, 2013). This case study helped to find the answer of the research questions and objectives stated earlier in a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

## Findings and Discussions

The data was transcribed and the researcher identified the main points and put them as a node and did the coding using the NVivo. The researcher then identified them into the themes. This is based on the scholars in the qualitative research methods (such as Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Yin, 2013). The researcher aware on the best data for the best results to be understood in this current research. The interviews were done with the six (6) participants as stated earlier guide the researchers to interpret the meanings of the outcomes of the interviews. It directs the researcher to develop a model based on the themes developed through a rigorous process. Then after the researcher draft the model, it had been validated with the 2 participants who held the senior position in the company. The interviews were done to get the final check on the model of the relationships developed by this research.

This section reveals the results of the interviews with 6 (six) participants in six sectors in the large companies. Table 3 explains on the employees concern on the change in the organization and how they share the real insight on their commitment to change.

*Table 3: Description Table of Employees' Commitment to Change*

Theme	Descriptions
1. Sincerity & Respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Employee who is sincere to participate and involve in the change project and strive to achieve the targets set by the top management</li> <li>- Employees shows the same pace reciprocal of change in the organization by working hard</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Each employee monitored each other performance in order to ensure that it will boost them to the expected change level at ease.</li> <li>- The sincerity comes from feeling respectful to the top management and their leaders (direct and indirect leaders), and a mutual respect.</li> </ul>
2. Teamwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The leader, who could treat the employees fair enough and acknowledge their contribution, will make them good team players and support the teamwork.</li> <li>- Employee felt important to work as a team, and be a good team player in order to achieve the desirable outcomes in the change programs</li> <li>- Each individual must play an important role as a change agent in the company</li> <li>- Teamwork will becoming more effective and efficient by helping each other, and this considered as a learning curve.</li> </ul>
3. Trust and Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Employees who has each individual has their own characteristics, goals, values, thoughts that different to another. Most of the employees tend to underrate the importance of change itself and more comfortable in the common ground rules.</li> <li>- The employees cannot follow the new system implemented in their company. They lost their trust towards the company by feeling insecure, uncomfortable and unsatisfied. Consequently, the high turn-over happened because they react to resign from the company and look for another company that they are familiar with and at least will make them feel secure about the job tasks.</li> <li>- The trust resulted from the leaders who could express their mission and vision clearly, what they want from the employees, and what the employees could get from the company's change effort. The leaders need to convince the employees on the benefits that they might receive when implemented change.</li> <li>- The energy on the change commitment is also because of the prediction of a long term company health and wealth. Therefore, the employee would support and commit no matter what to achieve the desirable results.</li> </ul>
4. Authentic personality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Personality and characteristics indeed affect respond towards change that makes it different to react. Employees agree that not only them, but the leader should be authentic too. This kind of leader is the one who actually being himself or herself and show his/her true colors and proud to share his/her objectives on change. Hence, they need an authenticity style of a leader to guide, facilitate and</li> </ul>

	<p>mentoring them for change efforts to be done during the hard and easy time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Personality traits determine their reactions towards change as well as their commitment. The importance of individuals revealed from the personality traits on how they could manage the change implementation in the company whether they would accept or resist to it.</li> <li>- Employees with authentic personality seem easy to manage the change crisis. They are aware about the possible outcomes that might not as expected though their awareness towards dangers are fascinating.</li> <li>- Although change can be quite difficult for most people, some of employees are also can be excited and positive about it. The traits that support change and even participate in change usually open-minded, versatile, flexible, and creative.</li> </ul>
4. Company Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Company engagement of multiple levels is likely contribute to the change process. It might not be seen obviously, but it really affects the change effectiveness through the employees' commitment to change.</li> <li>- Particularly, engagement between the leader-follower would build trust among the employees to embrace the change.</li> <li>- Engagement is indeed an element to prevent and to anticipate the resistance among employees that against change. The lesser the resistance, the more committed the persons and the more effective the change implementation will be. Consequently, it gains more trust and avoid the hesitation among employees that lead to resistance and makes the employees deeply understand the reasons why the company should change. Again, the trust that built increases their commitment to change.</li> </ul>
6. Sense of Belongings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Employee sense of belongings to the company particularly because the leaders inspired them. The passionate in leaders to make things better urge them to do the change, the "sense of urgency" on the change to be happened drive them to commit to change.</li> <li>- The tendency of a company to change will be determined by their culture. The stronger the culture, the harder a company is able to change. A strong organizational culture is good to handle and to direct a company's vision and mission but it causes a problem when a company needs to change.</li> <li>- Organic style of leadership is important where they bring the employees together to achieve the targets, hence the</li> </ul>

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employees will have the sense of belonging to the company.

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#### 7. Strong Leadership

- Leadership likely is the unquestionable factor needed in any organizations, particularly if a change is needed in that organization because there should be a person who lead, control and manage the unpredictable situation.
  - “Strong leadership” is the main essence to the employees’ commitment to change as the employees stated how the leaders should not be too involve in the office politic that shows their weaknesses and incompetence which lead to disrespectful among employees. Thus this will make the change objectives tough to be achieved.
  - In implementing change within the organizations, company should not preserve the status quo. Hence, the appropriate leadership style that constantly fit with the change is transformational leadership. This style inspires their subordinates and encourages them to do their work beyond the expectation. They regard their leaders as their role models. Their loyalty towards their leader is somewhat unconditional one without any forces
  - On the contrary, the application of transactional leadership is not appropriate enough for long term changes, especially if they expect to get a committed employee.
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All six participants agreed that change is needed in all of organizations to keep their existence in global business. The rapid change of technology and the external force from their competitors compelled them to eventually change, no matter how steady a company is. Organizational change is mandatory in this current business as well as the employees’ commitment to execute the change.

#### **Sincerity**

Sincerity is important in the change efforts. By having a sincere commitment to change the change will happen easily and smoothly. The sincerity is important in order to achieve the end results. For the participants who are also the leader, by doing the monitoring on the commitment among employees that they devoted to the company, it will boost them to the change at ease. This is stated by The Operation Manager of the Manufacturing company that:

*“I would definitely support the change in the company if it is for benefits of us all. My points, well, I am confident and sincere of doing that....”*

His statement is further supported by The Assistant Manager of the Energy and Utilities, stressed that:

*“We do changes and we commit to change because we know that is necessary. Not only myself, my colleagues that I have known also have to do what we have to do in order to save our ‘periuk nasi’ (source of income)”*

The discussions with the Assistant Manager during the tea break, he further stated that the sincerity build when she admires the way her superior working to overcome the obstacles, hence it makes her respect the leader and trying hard to fulfill the company objectives. Not only that, the mutual respect showed by the leaders increase the sincerity among the employees to commit to the changes in the company. This shows the importance of leadership towards developing the employees’ sincerity, as Alimo-Metcalf, Alban-Metcalf, Bradley, Mariathasan and Samele, (2008) stated that transformational leadership encourage and motivate the development of their employees based on integrity, openness, transparency and the genuine valuing of others and their contributions. This believes add a significant to the current study when the organizations embarking on change.

### **.Teamwork**

Most of the participants agreed that being a team player is very important and feeling of being a team player lead them to a good teamwork that commit to change. They commit to change in order to achieve the desirable outcomes in the change programs. The leader is playing an important role, in the sense that they should treat the employees with the fairness and unbiased. Moreover, the employees felt that they should be acknowledged and recognized of their contributions to the change initiatives and programs in the company. Hence, this will make them feel good and will be a good team players and support the teamwork.

The Head of Development and Performance from Telecommunication sector remarked his opinion:

*“I always believe that a good change comes from a good team player. My job is to make sure that all of my team can adapt and follow to whatever change implemented in this company. I can see that the team who can follow it easily, they really commit to follow the new agenda. Of course, they need time to adapt with it but eventually they get used to it. For me, the most important thing is how they can attach to the new change. Then I must acknowledge how commit they are.”*

Furthermore, the employees believe that each individual must play an important role as a change agent in the company. This is related to what The Manager of Customer Relations from the Automotive sector claimed that:

*“We are the change agent. That’s what I am doing currently, being the change agent of my own company. It is not an easy task, but I have to bring all my followers to commit to change. It is a good lessons for all of us...”*

*“...from my experiences our team will be more effective if we take care each other. I have to know what their concerns .... And I presume this will help us to achieve our mission successfully, in the change projects.”*

The Operation Manager from the Manufacturing sector stressed that:

*“...people management, is about working together with people and understand them. It is not about individual achievements but the teamwork. Hence the teamwork achievement is a sustainable commitment among the employees.”*

Obviously, the teamwork motivates the employees to commit change. The employees also perceived the change programs in the company as something useful in their learning curve, which is in line with Hawkins and Dulewicz (2009) examined the relationships among leadership style, emotional intelligence, context and performance. He found leadership was crucial factor for the commitment of the followers, however he did not discovered how this style enhance the teamwork among the employees to commit to change.

### **Trust and Energy**

Generally, the participants assumed that the failure in employees' commitment to change were from the individual itself. It means that the employees as the individuals have a crucial part in the change process. The challenge that lead to the failure is each individual has their own characteristics, goals, values, thoughts that different to another. Most of them tend to underrate the importance of change itself and more comfortable in the common ground rules. The Operation Manager from Manufacturing sector highlighted about the failure in change:

*“I think most of change failure happen because there's no commitment. I would like to say that to stay committed is a tough job. Especially, if it's related the paradox thingy whereby you should be consistent to commit to something and at the same time, you gotta commit towards change. Change itself is dynamic, unpredictable, moving. Commitment to change is likely a mission impossible.”*

The employees cannot follow the new system implemented in their company. They lost their trust towards the company by feeling insecure, uncomfortable and unsatisfied. Consequently, the high turn-over happened because they react to resign from the company and look for another company that they are familiar with and at least will make them feel secure about the job tasks.

The Head of Sales from Oil and Gas sector put some interesting points about commitment as stated below:

*“In my opinion, being committed isn't only about loyalty to work in your current company but beyond that! You put trust, energy, and idea to contribute to this company. Even, you sacrifice to go out from your comfort zone to follow the change. no one like change, especially if your current situation makes you on. Commitment makes you still excited about the work even if it's already changed! Can you imagine what kind of work you gonna make if your team are ready and excited about change?”*

The participants mostly would trust the change programs would benefit them all if they have a clear vision from the leaders. The employees seek for the leaders who could express their mission and vision clearly, and what they want from the employees. The end game should be clearly justified by the leaders and deliberate clearly to be achieved by the employees. Furthermore, the leaders need to convince the employees on the benefits that they might receive when implemented change. The energy on the change commitment is also because of the prediction of a long term

company health and wealth. The energy comes from the trust to accept the change and to commit to change. Therefore, the employee would support and commit no matter what to achieve the desirable results. Limsila and Ogunlana (2008) indicated that leaders could produce outcomes with effective and great work outcomes from followers which are always desirable, but they do not always happen and people normally respond well only to appropriate types of leadership.

### **Authentic personality**

The individual issues likely are being underestimated. The implementation of change affects the personality of individuals. The importance of individuals revealed from the personality traits. According to participants, personality traits determine their reactions towards change as well as their commitment. Some traits are positive about change and vice versa, hence the important to be authentic so that it will make a crystal clear on the individuals true colors.

Personality and characteristics indeed affect respond towards change that makes it different to react. Employees agree that not only them, but the leader should be authentic too. This kind of leader is the one who actually being himself or herself and show his/her true colors and proud to share his/her objectives on change. Hence, they need an authenticity style of a leader to guide, facilitate and mentor them for change efforts to be done during the hard and easy time. Personality traits determine their reactions towards change as well as their commitment. The importance of individuals revealed from the personality traits on how they could manage the change implementation in the company whether they would accept or resist to it.

The Manager of Customer Relations in automotive sector remarked his point of view as stated below:

*“The types of characters and personality determine their acceptance towards change. Some people are resistance to change, some people are excited about the change.”*

It was indicated from five traits in personality that each trait has their own character to react to change. Therefore, it is important to be the real you when embracing change so that it is helpful to the superior-subordinate relationship to commit to change. From the reactions we can determine their commitment towards the change. Surprisingly, not all personality traits show the excitement towards change. For instance, the agreeableness people who like to help others and easily follow others. They like peace and tend to avoid conflicts. As we know, change is about reforming and moving. Change is somehow uncomfortable journey through a difficult path. They seem agree to follow the change, instead they tried to manipulate the system by only giving the good news and avoid to solve the problems as it indicated that the system will change.

Likewise, the neuroticism faced the same problem in terms of committed to change. They are the worriers about the possible outcomes that might not as expected though their awareness towards dangers are fascinating. Most of neuroticism like consistency, they will get stressed if they are forced to do change. Hence, most of companies dealt with a quite serious issues if they have employees who have this typical trait. As quoted from The Head of Sales from Oil and Gas sector remarked:

*“We faced serious issues related the anxious employees who cannot work under pressure. To work in this industry, you must be able to adapt quickly due to how fluctuate this sector.”*



In addition, The Operation Manager from Manufacturing sector remarked an interesting point regarding the negative traits among employees:

*“I found it difficult to handle the rigid (neuroticism) type of employees. Particularly, we need the employees who have the innovative ideas to present new products. The same case happened with the employees who only agree (agreeableness) what we instruct them to. Sometimes, we need an employee who has different ideas and opinions so that we have a new perspective.”*

Although change can be quite difficult for most people, some of employees are also can be excited and positive about it. The traits that support change and even participate in change usually open-minded, versatile, flexible, creative. These traits reveal in personality traits such as extraversion, openness and conscientiousness. These three personality traits were found that they positively support and committed to change. Firstly, the extraversion trait relates with sociability and adventurous skill that makes them easily adapt with change. they always seek for new things and would take a risk for it. Meanwhile, the openness trait relates with intelligence, interest in new things, innovativeness and open to new experience. It makes them committed strongly to change due to they take it as a challenge. For conscientiousness, they are discipline, dependable, have a strong will, responsible and ambitious. Hence, due to their dedication towards their job, they will commit to change for betterment of their company. The Assistant General Manager of energy and utilities sector gives his remarks about conscientiousness trait as follow:

*“I’m so surprised by my employees who seemed rigid and conventional. I thought they will hardly follow the change in this company. Instead. They show their commitment for whatever it takes of their works. We shouldn’t underestimate and easily judged people then. Anyone can surprise you!”*

Moreover, The Manager of Human Resource remarked the following comment on personality that support change as below:

*“Some of our employees are versatile to follow the change. These types of employees (openness and extraversion) are the ones we expected to join in our company. Their energy and vibes can stimulate and transmit to others so that we gonna have a solid team to move forward.”*

This is new findings and none of the previous research included the authenticity in the personality factors on the employees’ commitment to change. For example, Herold et al. (2007) investigated the influence of the contextual and personal factors of employee commitment to change in the United States. They found that a positive relationship between self-efficacy and commitment to change was stronger as the amount of simultaneous and overlapping change in the surroundings increased. They suggested for further research to be conducted by including other contextual variables, particularly in this study the unique nature of the settings study. There is a need to understand the unique personality and characteristics of the employees and the organizational commitment to change (Spagnoli & Caetano, 2012; Zettler Friedrich, & Hilbig, 2011).

## **Company Engagement**

Participants opined that company engagement of multiple levels is likely an intangible factor that contributes to the change process. It might not be seen obviously, but it really affects the change

effectiveness through the employees' commitment to change. Particularly, engagement between the leader-follower would build trust among the employees to embrace the change.

The participants admitted that the role of communication determines how good they convince the team to participate and to commit to change. Engagement is beyond the communication, is indeed an element to prevent and to anticipate the resistance among employees that against change. The lesser the resistance, the more committed the persons and the more effective the change implementation will be. Consequently, it gains more trust and avoid the hesitation among employees that lead to resistance and makes the employees deeply understand the reasons why the company should change. Again, the trust that built increases their commitment to change.

On the other hand, sometimes, the nature of engagement also related to the personality of individuals. For instance, the way we dealt with people cannot be standardized generally. Every single person has different personality and characters. Some people can get motivation by challenges and some people get the motivation by supports. Those matters are really contrast and opposite each other. If we communicate it with the wrong people, it will just turn them down. As quoted by The Head of Development and Performance from telecommunication sector, he highlighted his experience dealt with his employees as below:

*"I realized that sometimes the employees cannot take an offensive comment from me. I feel that they want to be understood emotionally. When it comes to work professionally, I need to lead rationally and prioritize our goals. In order to get what I want, I need to compromise with their feelings and that's how good I communicate with them. It's easy to just telling them what I want the way I want. Yet, the challenging part is how can we communicate the information to them and know they understand it without patronize them. Well, some people get offended easily."*

The effective internal communication may affect the significant result among employees. If they were being engaged in the company, they will believe that the company can give them a better benefit in terms of their job, they will automatically commit to the company for change. The interesting evidence was found in Palm and Oil sector, as The Manager of Human Resource mentioned:

*"In our company, an ineffective communication caused the distrust among employees. For example, lately we adapt our system with technology that used to help our workers. But then, they have their own thought that the machines replaced their jobs. We need to give them understanding through an effective communication, and not only that they engagement is very important. We should convince them that the machines help increase the productions that actually can increase their salary at the end."*

Moreover, The Manager of Human Resource remarked the following comments below:

*"The engagement is understand them, be with them formally or informally, listen to them..... I also want my boss to listen to me empathically and to mingle with me in many occasions, like the high tea, lunch, meetings, and discussions and so on. Hence, it is easy to do "kauntim" (negotiation) how he would like the change to be taken."*

Kavanagh and Ashkanasy (2006) found leadership is essential in enhancing commitment to change among employees. Others also look at the communications that to increase the understanding on the change hence to get the employees' commitment (Ahmad & Jalil, 2013; Erdheim, Wang, & Zickar, 2006). Though, further specific study on the different styles of leadership need to be explored and how they react to buy in the employees to commit to change.

### **Sense of Belongings**

The tendency of a company to change will be determined by their values and norms. The stronger the positive values and norms, the easier a company to align to the directions set by the top management and enable them to commit change. Participants who felt sense of belongings to the company and also loyal to their professions particularly would assist the company's vision and mission and to commit to change. Most of participants stated that employees have the sense of belongings to the company particularly because the leaders inspired them. The passionate in leaders to make things better, urge them to do the change, the "sense of urgency" on the change to be happened drive them to commit to change.

The Assistant Manager pointed out his remarkable point regarding organizational values and norms as mentioned below:

*"We need to change certain culture in order to survive in this market. Our company tried to monitor our employees' attitude (personality) so that they are able to adapt with the new changes. We want our culture to be "constantly change" so that we are able to adapt with any challenges. We want to be a versatile company in this technology-savvy era. "*

In addition, the Manager of Customer Relation from automotive sector highlighted the importance of values in organizational culture among employees as stated below:

*"I, personally as a leader in this company, believe that if I (leader) able to show my values as well as this company's value towards the employees, they will feel genuinely that this company as their part so that they will commit to something that belong to them. "*

The Head of Development and Performance from telecommunication sector, he highlighted his commitment to change as below:

*"I admired so much my boss. He shows how important for us to depart from our current state to betterment. He told me if I couldn't change he will send me to get a proper training. But, before he even send me to get a proper training, I learnt myself on how to use the technology so that I can understand better my new tasks. It was a feeling of the sense of belongings, therefore I could spare my own time and spend my own money in order to learn new things to support my company. "*

The Operation Manager from Manufacturing sector remarked an interesting point regarding the sense of belongings and the leadership as below:

*"I like to give my perspective of change in the company. I am willing to come out with the new ideas because my superior allows me to do so. He is not an armchair type but he is more on the people management. "*

Organic style of leadership that deal with people and focus on the soft factors, is important where they bring the employees together to achieve the targets, hence the employees will have the sense of belongings to the company. This is what Senge (2014) stressed in his findings in the important of the company to understand the employees and how to increase their commitment to the organizational agenda. The sense of belongings is very important in the change efforts (Ahmad & Jalil, 2013), but there are no literatures that discussed its role in employees' commitment to change and the sense of belonging in deep.

## **Strong Leadership**

The change can be difficult that forced to control and manage the situation based on the participants said. Leaders have power to influence and control people. In order to ask the employees to commit to change, the certain thing is by influence them to change. This thing can be done by leadership skills. Leadership likely is the unquestionable factor needed in any organizations, particularly if a change is needed in that organization because there should be a person who lead, control and manage the unpredictable situation.

In implementing change within the organizations, company should not preserve the status quo. Hence, the appropriate leadership style that constantly fit with the change is transformational leadership. This style inspires their subordinates and encourages them to do their work beyond the expectation. They regard their leaders as their role models. Their loyalty towards their leader is somewhat unconditional one without any forces. Hence, they will commit to any implementation of change where they are work at. As long as their leaders are there to inspire and motivate them, they will commit sincerely.

As quoted by Head of Sales of oil and gas sector as below:

*“One of the best things a leader can do to his team is by giving the inspiration to their work that can affect their life. It's a rare thing to get an employee who found themselves to work passionately and has self-belongings towards their companies. It's my job to make sure that I gain their trust and respect so that they will work heartily. I'd realized that it's good to find a good employee who did their job but it's even greater to find them who did it beyond our expectation exceeding their work. That's only can be found through inspiration.”*

On the contrary, the application of transactional leadership is not appropriate enough for long term changes, especially if they expect to get a committed employee. Transactional leadership only works for the rewards based on what the employees give to the companies. To get a truly committed employee for a change, we must firstly get their heart. Commitment requires trust, sincerity, and loyalty. In a long term changes, any circumstances can be happening and might not run smoothly.

Hence, we need employees who stay still in our company no matter what. Nevertheless, this style can work in a short term changes. As highlighted by Assistant Manager of energy and utilities sector as follow:

*“I don’t really believe that ‘old-fashioned’ leadership style (transactional) is still applicable nowadays. We can’t be too formal and distant with our team (employees). We need to be close to them to make sure they did what we want. Transactional style only creates a “pushover”. For change implementation, we ain’t only need a team who just listen and follow our instructions, instead, we need them to give their ideas and aspiration for a better change.”*

Other interesting points given by The Operation Manager from manufacturing sector highlighted on the strong leadership:

*“Strong leadership it is different from being too nice or Mr. Right all the times. You should have your own stand and you should not involve yourself in the office politic that would jeopardize the whole systems. Once you are so involved in the internal politics it showed how incompetence you are and employees would notice that and would not support your change projects.... Because they are not with you and not trusted you anymore...”*

Strong leadership is the main essence to the employees’ commitment to change as the employees stated how the leaders should not be too involve in the office politic that shows their weaknesses and incompetence which lead to disrespectful among employees. Thus this will make the change objectives tough to be achieved (also supported by Herold (2007), and Yu et al. (2002). Furthermore, Lo et al., (2010) examined the influence of transformational leadership on employee commitment to change in the Malaysian higher education context. They found that two dimensions of transformational leadership style, namely idealised influence and intellectual stimulation, had a significant impact on three dimensions of commitment to change, namely personal goals, capacity belief and context belief. Their research indicated that although leadership style is an essential requirement for effective and efficient commitment, there have been very few empirical studies on leadership style and organizational commitment to change, which seize the opportunity for the current researcher to investigate.

## **Conclusions**

The qualitative results reveal the real insights of the employees’ commitment to change. The model exploration shows the relationship of the themes emerging from the study. Hence, the findings show the importance of leadership to triggers the employees’ sense of belongings and readiness to embrace change. They also would felt the sense of urgency to do the changes in the current status quo. Consequently, it could ensure the employees’ commitment to change. The keys on the individual concerns of their commitment to change are the authenticity, strong, visionary, and passion leaders that could bring the change successful. The human factors and the organic approach of the leadership need to be practiced and would simply buy in the employees from all levels to commit to change whether physically or mentally. Hence, this is considered as the emotionally-driven commitment to change that most of us do not realized before. This naturalistic results are hoped to contribute to the body of knowledge and recommended for the future research to study on the leadership factors in more detail in a natural settings using the ethnographic approach and looking at the individual concerns of other aspects.

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